

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

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C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 2490

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, SA, US

SUBJECT: CHANGES IN FOREIGN MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAM

REF STATE 51768

1. THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS OF USMTM CHIEF, BG AHMANN, ARE
RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ASKED IN REFTEL:

A. (C) HIGHER PRICES FOR TRAINING COURSES WILL NOT, BY
THEMSELVES, HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT ON BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH
SAG. A RECENT PRESENTATION OF AN LOA REFLECTING THE NEW
PRICES ELICITED ONLY MINOR COMMENTS. OUR PRICE INCREASES
FOLLOWED SIMILAR ACTIONS BY THE BRITISH AND CANADIANS AND
WERE TAKEN AS A MATTER OF ECONOMIC REALITY. HOWEVER, THE
IMPACT WILL BE MORE UNFAVORABLE IN RELATION TO RMS TRAINING
CASE AMENDMENTS TO ADJUST CASE COSTS UPWARD AFTER THE CASES
HAVE BEEN SIGNED. ADDITIONALLY, COSTS OF TRAINING FOR
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FIELD TEAM (TAFT) MEMBERS ARE VERY HIGH
FOR PILOTS AND MUST BE AMORTIZED OVER A ONE YEAR PERIOD.
SAG MAY WELL SEE THESE COSTS AS EXCESSIVE. WE SHOULD RECOG-
NIZE IN OUR PRICING THAT WE RECEIVE LONG TERM BENEFITS FROM THIS
TRAINING AND REVIEW THE PRESENT HIGH COSTS BASED ON THE
DOLLAR VALUE OF SUCH TRAINING TO THE U.S. ACCORDINGLY.

B. (C) THE SAUDI ARMED FORCES ARE INTERESTED FIRST IN
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TECHNICAL SKILL COURSES (PILOT TRAINING-BASIC-ADVANCED,

NAVY BASIC/ADVANCED SKILLS, ARMY IMPROVED HAWK, MECHANIZED EQUIPMENT); SECOND, PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION COURSE (COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE, SQUADRON OFFICER SCHOOL); THIRD, CONUS TRAINING FOR RECRUITS. SAG IS CURRENTLY PAYING FOR ALL SUCH TRAINING. WE ANTICIPATE SAG WILL CONTINUE TO BUY THIS TRAINING AT THE NEW PRICES.

C. (C) THE HIGH SKILL COURSES (PILOT TRAINING, IMPROVED HAWK, MECHANIZED EQUIPMENT, SHIP OPERATIONS/MAINTENANCE) AND THE INTERMEDIATE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS HAVE THE GREATEST BENEFIT TO U.S. INTERESTS. THE SKILL COURSES ASSURE THAT THE SAUDI ARMED FORCES CAN USE THE EQUIPMENT PURCHASED FROM THE U.S. THE PROFESSIONAL COURSES CONTRIBUTE STRONGLY TOWARD BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF U.S. POLICIES AND MILITARY PROFESSIONALISM. GENERALLY, COURSES WHICH LAST SIX MONTHS OR LONGER BENEFIT THE U.S. BECAUSE FAMILIES NORMALLY ACCOMPANY STUDENTS. THIS LEADS TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE U.S. IN A POSITIVE WAY. NO COURSES ARE UNDER GRANT ASSISTANCE.

D. (C) TO DATE, THE ONLY TRAINING ENDANGERED BY THE NEW PRICING POLICIES APPEARS TO BE THE ADDITION OF TWO INSTRUCTOR PILOTS TO THE FIGHTER OPERATIONS TAFT. THE ADDITIONAL COSTS OF TRAINING THESE PILOTS ARE HIGHLY VISIBLE AND ARE BEING QUESTIONED IN LIGHT OF THE ONE YEAR PERIOD OF SERVICE INVOLVED. WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE SIGNIFICANT ABANDONMENT OF TRAINING.

E. (C) IF THE SAUDIS DECIDE TO LOOK ELSEWHERE FOR TRAINING, ENGLAND, FRANCE, AND PAKISTAN PROBABLY WOULD BE THE BENEFICIARIES. THIS DEVELOPMENT WOULD SHARPLY RETARD THE DEVELOPMENT OF SAUDI MILITARY COMPETENCE AND CAPABILITY, WOULD REDUCE PURCHASES FROM THE U.S. AND WOULD CERTAINLY WORSEN BILATERAL RELATIONS. THIS DOES NOT SEEM PROBABLE IN VIEW OF INCREASING SAUDI COMMITMENT TO U.S. EQUIPMENT FOR THEIR MODERNIZATION.

F. NOT APPLICABLE.
PORTER

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